

Reaching Out in Region 4

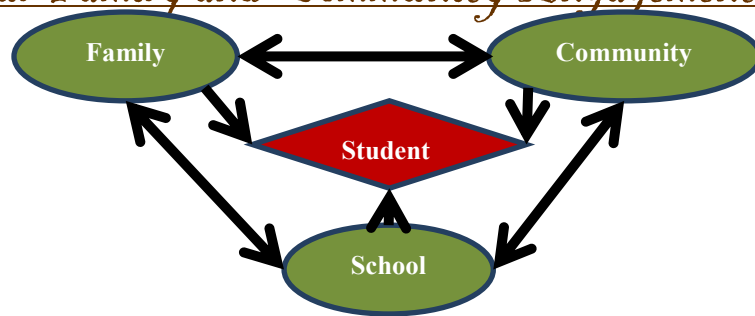
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Meaningful Family and Community Engagement

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Being in the business of educating children we are all first to recognize the importance of parent involvement. We believe that if parents are involved this will have a positive academic and behavioral impact which will lead to success.

Meaningful engagement means that the school, family, and community are engaged in coordination at a level that will assist in removing all educational barriers for all students. It is important to leverage the power of families, community members, community organizations, and the school as active partners to support the student and remove all barriers to help accelerate the academic and personal growth of all students.

MEANINGFUL family engagement involves more than having fun evenings of activities that parents and students participate in together. Those are great events that schools should be encouraged to have in building a positive welcoming climate. However, these events tend to allow parents and families to be passively engaged. When discussing MEANINGFUL family engagement it is important to note:

- To actively engage families is to keep them informed about the academic progress of their student and how this is in comparison to expected learning goals or targets for that grade level. Parents need to know where their student is achieving in relation to the goal or expected outcome.
- There is power in parents being informed and they need to know that they are an active participant in the instructional decisions of their student. Parents in this process can also be

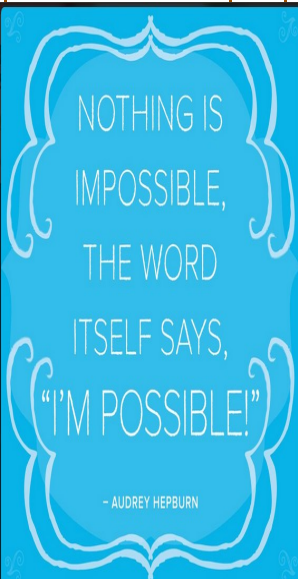
informed how they can help their student in progressing towards the learning goals or student outcomes.

- When initiating this contact with parents it is important to make this a positive impact that the education of the child is a team effort.
- Families should be provided opportunities to provide input on school decisions through PTOs, Parent Councils, School Leadership Councils, or Town halls. School leaders can use this valuable feedback to make decisions accordingly.

Community engagement is also a component of this principle.

- It is important for schools to cultivate and build relationships with community partners and organizations that can provide support in identified needs of families and students.
- Many times the community organizations are willing to establish and coordinate the service they provide with the school building. All students can achieve to meet high expectations when their emotional, behavioral, physical, and academic needs are met.
- Critical community partnerships will build a network of services that can be provided to families and students that schools cannot otherwise provide alone with the goal of removing or reducing barriers to the academic achievement and personal growth of students.

Doug Thieme Outreach Region 8



Family Friendly Environments

1. Post welcome signs in all the languages spoken in the school.
2. Create a classroom/school environment (pictures, books, resources, etc.) that reflects the diversity of families included in the school.
3. Maintain a welcoming bulletin board that includes visitor information, announcements, news articles, and photographs of recent school events.
4. Create and post user-friendly school maps in several places throughout the school building.
5. Develop the school as a “culturally competent system” staffed by individuals “whose behaviors, attitudes, and policies recognize, respect, and value the uniqueness of individuals and groups whose cultures are different from those associated with mainstream American culture” (Engiles, Fromme, LeResche, & Moses, 1999).
6. Provide disability access to buildings and parking areas.
7. Create a family center where parent involvement activities are coordinated.

Action Steps for Family Friendly Schools

Action Steps:

- Establish a stakeholder group of parents and school staff to guide family-friendly development and activities
- Assess the diversity of families in your school, including diversity in race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, home language, and disability, and create a school environment that is friendly to all families
- Create a family-friendly policy or mission for the school
- Create a school environment that is welcoming to families
- Plan regular events to bring families and school staff together for positive interaction in support of learning

Family Friendly Staffs

School staff who are successful in engaging family members share the following qualities:

- They know they must have the support of parents.
- In every interaction, they demonstrate their concern for the child.
- They always treat parents the way they would like to be treated.
- They always demonstrate professionalism and confidence.

(Canter & Canter, 1991)

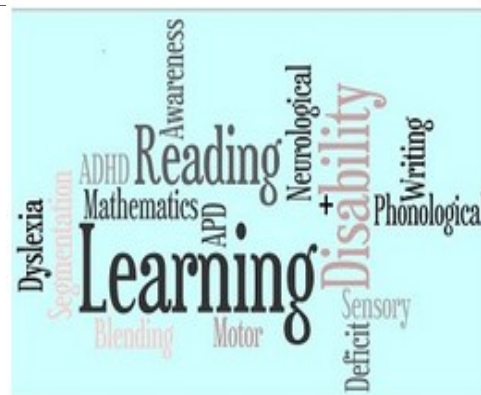
Ways to Welcome New Families

1. Create a welcoming booklet and/or videotape that provide helpful information to families about school policies, personnel, assistance, resources, and volunteer opportunities.
2. Coordinate school tours and orientation sessions for new families.
3. Link new families with volunteer mentors who have children who are similar in age, cultural background, disabling condition, etc. to provide information, guidance, and support.



Resources

- [Resources and Downloads for College and Career Readiness](#)
- [20 Questions to Guide Inquiry Based Learning](#)
- [Myth Busting: No Time to Differentiate](#)
- [Word Up: The Must Do of Vocabulary Instruction](#)
- [Teaching Literary Analysis](#)
- [Strategies to Encourage Close Reading](#)
- [5 Listening Strategies](#)
- [Writing Instruction Resources](#)
- [3 Questions for Changing School Climate](#)
- [10 Things I'd Like to See in Every Classroom](#)
- [NCII and NCSI Co-Host Upcoming Webinar on Tiered Interventions](#)
- [50 Nifty Ideas for Increasing Parent Engagement](#)
- [Parent Friendly Schools Starting the Conversation](#)
- [Family Friendly Schools Assessment Tool](#)
- [Single Parenting Workshop Guide](#)
- [Creating a Family Friendly School Environment](#)
- [East Central Educational Service Center Workshops](#)



[Reading Strategies for Students with Disabilities](#)